

Let's Talk About...

Infant Formula Basics

What is the best food for my baby?

Breastfeeding is the best way to feed your baby. However, not all babies are able to breastfeed. This means you may need to feed your baby formula. Infant formulas are safe and nutritious, and contain many of the same ingredients as breast milk. This fact sheet will help you choose a formula for your baby.



How does one formula differ from another?

In most important ways, all formulas are the same. The Food and Drug Administration says that all infant formulas sold in the United States must have certain amounts of protein, fat, carbohydrates and many other nutrients. These are what your baby needs to grow. So, the formulas that you find in the store will be fine for most babies.

A company called Abbott Nutrition (makers of Similac) is the main supplier of infant formula for Intermountain hospitals. The list below has all of the formula brands used at Intermountain. **While your baby is in the hospital, if you prefer to give your baby a brand that's not listed here, you're welcome to do that.** Just make sure that the formula containers you bring are **unopened** and **sealed**, and that you **check with the hospital dietitian first** to make sure it will meet your baby's needs.

Formula basics

Formulas are made with different sources of proteins, sugars, and other ingredients. These are some basic differences between them:

- **Protein source.** Some formulas are made from cow's milk protein and some are made from soy protein. Formulas made with soy protein are labeled "soy-based." Soy-based formulas should never be given to premature babies.
- **Sugar.** Lactose is a sugar found in many milk-based formulas. Some babies don't tolerate lactose and may need a formula without it. Formulas without lactose are labeled "lactose-free."
- **Organic.** The American Academy of Pediatrics has stated that organic formulas are not any more or less nutritious than regular formulas. Organic formulas usually cost more than regular formulas.

Formulas used in Intermountain hospitals:

- For well newborns
 - Similac Advance
 - Similac Organic
- For preterm infants
 - NeoSure
 - Similac Special Care (20, 24, 24 high protein, 30 kcal/oz)
 - Similac Liquid & Powder HMF
- For infants with mild sensitivity to milk
 - Soy Isomil
 - ProSobee
 - Similac Sensitive
 - Similac for Spit-Up
 - Similac Total Comfort
 - Gentlease
- For infants with impaired digestion or other problems
 - Alimentum
 - Pregestimil
 - EleCare
 - Neocate
 - Liquid Protein Fortifier
 - Other Specialty Products: Enfaport, KetoCal, Similac PM 60/40, metabolic formulas

Additional nutrients

In addition to the required nutrients, some brands have extra nutrients. These can include:

- **Iron.** Almost all formulas now contain extra iron. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends it for most babies.
- **DHA and ARA.** These are types of fat found in breast milk. Studies show that these fats aid in eye and brain development.
- **Hydrolyzed whey protein.** This protein is broken into smaller bits so your baby can digest it more easily. Studies say it may help prevent allergies in babies who have a family history of them.
- **Probiotics and prebiotics.** Probiotics are helpful bacteria that are similar to those normally found in your body. They may help with digestion and protect against harmful bacteria. Prebiotics are food ingredients that may help digestion. More research on these benefits is needed.

Do I have to add water?

It depends what type of formula you buy. There are three types:

- **Powdered** formula has instructions for how much water to mix with it. This is the least expensive type of formula, and it can be easily stored and transported.
- **Concentrated liquid** formula also has instructions for how much water to add.
- **Ready-to-feed** formula does not require water to be added. It comes in multiple or single-serving cans, or in ready-to-use baby bottles. It's easy to use, but it's also the most expensive type of formula available.

How do I prepare formula safely?

Always follow the instructions on the formula package.

- **Check the use-by date on the can.** Don't give your baby formula that is past the date.
- **Wash your hands** before mixing formula.
- **Use clean bottles, nipples, and water.**
- **USE ONLY THE AMOUNT OF FORMULA AND WATER RECOMMENDED ON THE PACKAGE.** This is extremely important. Don't try to "stretch" formula by adding more water. Your baby might not get enough nutrition. And poor nutrition can harm your baby. If you don't add enough water, your baby might get a tummy ache.
- **Never warm formula in the microwave.** Microwaves don't heat evenly, and your baby could get burned.

How do I store formula?

To reduce waste, prepare only the amount of formula your baby usually drinks in one feeding.

- Mixed formula is good for **one hour at room temperature.**
- Mixed formula can be stored in the refrigerator for **up to 24 hours.**
- Powdered formula can be stored in a cool, dry place **no more than 30 days** after the can has been opened.
- Never freeze formula.

What else can my baby drink?

Your baby should drink only formula or breast milk for the first year of life. Water, sugar-water, juice and electrolyte drinks (such as Pedialyte) are not needed unless your doctor recommends them.

Do not give cow's milk, goat's milk, or soy milk to a baby younger than one year of age. These milks are high in protein and salt, and are harder for babies to digest. Also, these milks don't have many of the important vitamins and minerals your baby needs.

When should I call my healthcare provider?

Call your healthcare provider if your baby is not tolerating the formula, or is having symptoms such as:

- Diarrhea
- Rash

If you have more questions about what to feed your baby, contact a registered dietitian.

My dietitian: _____

Phone: _____

To locate a registered dietitian (RD) at Intermountain, go to intermountainhealthcare.org/RD.